



UNIVERSE

7

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7-ISSUE  
MINI-  
SERIES

# THE BATMAN

## WHO LAUGHS

HEEEERE'S  
BRUCIE!

SNYDER  
JOCK  
BARON

*John*



THEY HAVE **ONE** JOB:

to save the human race  
from the human race.

AND IT'S GOING TO **KILL** THEM.

# **WILD CATS**

A NEW 6-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES EXPLODING FROM THE PAGES OF THE WILD STORM

**WRITTEN BY WARREN ELLIS**   **ART BY RAMON VILLALOBOS**



**AUGUST**



HAVE YOU EVER HAD A  
MOMENT WHEN SOMETHING  
JUST SEEMED SO  
COMPLICATED AND SUDDENLY  
JUST... MADE SENSE?

WHEN YOU JUST  
GOT IT?

BECAUSE I  
WILL NOW... NO.

HAPPY?

TRUE HAPPINESS IS  
WHEN YOU BECOME  
THE PERSON YOU  
WERE ALWAYS  
MEANT TO BE.

WHEN YOU STOP  
FIGHTING AND  
JUST ACCEPT IT.

WHEN YOU  
THROW OFF THE  
ILLUSIONS, THE  
MASKS... AND  
JUST BE  
YOURSELF.

LAST FOR ME THE  
MOMENT IS NOW.

NOW!







# THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS

PART 7

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BATMAN created by BOB KANE with BILL FINGER







YES...

AND YOU  
THOUGHT I WAS  
THE BAD GUY...  
HA!



ONCE THE  
LIGHT ON THIS  
SYRINGE SHOWS  
RED...

...IT MEANS  
YOUR BLOOD IS  
MY BLOOD...



...AND I CAN  
USE YOUR PLASMA  
TO MAKE THE LAST BIT  
OF SERUM I NEED TO  
CHANGE THIS CITY INTO  
WHAT IT WAS ALWAYS  
MEANT TO BE.



BUT...  
IT MEANS  
SOMETHING  
ELSE, TOO.





"THERE'S NO  
HAPPY ENDING  
COMING..."



# BENEATH THE BATCAVE...

...NO  
LAST-MINUTE  
ESCAPE THIS  
TIME, JIM.

NO! FOR  
YEARS YOU KEPT  
HIM DOWN WITH YOUR  
FALSE MORALS,  
YOUR RULES...

=KOFF=  
JAMES! I'M  
BEGGING  
YOU TO--  
=ACK=

...BUT NO MORE! YOUR KNEE IS OFF HIS  
THROAT, OFF MY THROAT, OFF THE THROAT  
OF THIS WHOLE DAMN CITY--

WAIT, THIS  
KNEE?

=LINK=

=KOFF  
KOFF=

THE KNIFE,  
JAMES!

HE'S  
GOING FOR  
THE KNIFE!

GET IT  
FOR ME!

"I'M SO PROUD  
OF YOU."









HEH.



AND THEN  
THERE WERE  
TWO.

THIS IS IT,  
BRUCE.

FLY HIGH,  
MY FRIEND. FLY  
HIGH AND LEAD  
YOUR WORLD  
AS ITS TRUE  
BATMAN.





**BLAM**

YOU ALMOST HAD ME, BRUCE. LET ME GUESS. YOU KNEW ANY SYRINGE I BROUGHT WITH ME WOULD BE WAYNE TECH.

SO YOU RIGGED A CHARGE IN YOUR SUIT TO TURN THE LIGHT RED, WHEN IN REALITY...

...IT'D STILL BE GREEN. HAH!

TIK

NOW, I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE NOT CHANGING ALL THE WAY, BUT I DON'T CARE ANYMORE.

SEE, I WAS THE BEST FRIEND YOU'VE EVER HAD, BRUCE. BUT NOW...

"...NOW I'M JUST GOING TO ~~W@!%\*~~ KILL YOU."

YOU WANT ME TO...

HA. NO, I HAVE A BETTER IDEA...



...LET'S  
MAKE HIM  
THE *FIRST*  
ONE.

"SEE, JIM, RIGHT NOW THE  
*DRONES* ARE ON THEIR  
WAY HERE TO ACQUIRE  
WHAT THEY *THINK* IS AN  
ANTITOXIN FROM THE  
RESERVOIR TO SPRAY  
ACROSS THE CITY..."

"...BUT THAT  
ANTITOXIN IS  
OUR *SERUM*."

"ALL ANYONE HAS TO DO IS  
INGEST IT...DRINK IT IN, AND  
THEY WILL BECOME THEIR  
BEST, *DARKEST SELVES*."

HERE, JIM,  
HAVE A *SIP!*

=GURGGGLE=

SORRY, BRUCE,  
BUT YOU LOSE  
AGAIN! *NAMA!*

**BLAM**  
**AGH!**

SEE, I *WILL*  
CHANGE THIS WHOLE  
CITY. KNOW THAT AS  
YOU DIE. BECAUSE IF  
YOU WON'T GIVE ME  
WHAT I NEED TO  
COMPLETE THE *SERUM*,  
I'LL JUST BRING  
ANOTHER BRUCE  
WAYNE HERE. AND--

**NO!**









CALL  
TO YOUR  
BOY!

*SPLASH*  
AK!  
JAMES, PLEA--  
-GASP-



I'M  
SORRY,  
DAD...



"...BUT I'M GOOD  
WHERE I AM."



AW, COME ON  
OUT, BRUCE...  
I'M A FRIEND,  
I PROMISE.



I WON'T  
HURT YOU...

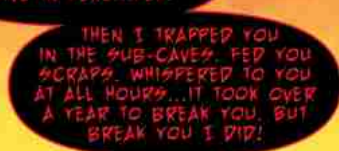
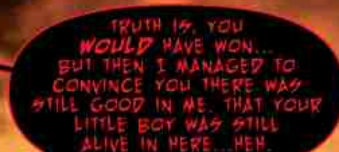


-HUFF HUFF-



...MUCH,  
NEH...









THAT WE'LL SEE SOON ENOUGH, WON'T WE?

APPROACHING TARGETS.

NOW GIVE ME THE BOY.



NEVER! YOU STAY BACK, YOU...ABOMINATION!

YOU THINK YOU CAN SAVE HIM? YOU'VE NEVER SAVED ANY BRUCE W--



--AGH!



I'LL BE... WHY THE HELL AREN'T YOU CHANGED?

JUST LUCKY I GUESS...

AH, WELL PLEASE TELL ME THIS WAS IT, YOUR BIG CONTINGENCY AFTER THE SYRINGE...



...LURING ME HERE SO ALFRED COULD SHOOT ME?

THIS WAS YOUR GREAT PLANE!



NO. THIS WAS.





AFTER OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER, I SET TRAPS FOR YOU IN PLACES ONLY BRUCE WAYNE WOULD KNOW... CRIME ALLEY, THE CAVE, THE MANOR... HERE.

BECAUSE I KNEW YOU'D MAKE ANY FIGHT PERSONAL FOR THE ~~SSSS~~SOUL OF BATMAN.

WHIR

CHK

HEH, YOU THINK A FEW TASERS WILL...

THINK

THINK

THINK

ZZZZZT

AAAGH!

DEPLETED URANIUM SHELL HARPOONS, ACTUALLY. MEANT FOR INCAPACITATING TANKS.

AND EVIL BATMEN.

STILL, FOR ALL YOUR ATTACKS, ALL YOUR PLANS...

DRONES EQUIPPED. PROCEEDING TO VACCINATION SITES.

...THE TRUTH IS, I PREPARED THE HARDEST TO DEFEND MYSELF AGAINST YOUR ARGUMENT. OF ALL THE BATMEN IN EXISTENCE, I'M THE LEAST HAPPY, LEAST EFFECTIVE... THE WORST.

BUT I JUST LOOKED INTO THE DARK MYSELF AND SAW HUNDREDS OF VERSIONS OF ME. AND THE THING I REALIZED...

...IS THAT BY THOSE STANDARDS, YOU'RE RIGHT. I AM THE WORST BATMAN OF ALL.





AND THE TRUTH...IT HURTS.

THOSE HARPOONS ARE HIGH VOLTAGE, BY THE WAY.

AAGH!



HOW THE HARDEST THING WHEN SOMEONE MAKES YOU SEE WHAT YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE ABOUT YOURSELF.

DRINK! DRINK OR YOUR SON HERE WILL CUT A HOLE IN YOUR WINDPIPE! ISN'T THAT RIGHT, JAMES?!



KAHNN!

YOU ARE THE WORST, YOU'RE A @#!% JOKE! WE ALL LAUGH AT YOU!



THAT MAY BE, BUT YOU KNOW WHO'S A BIGGER JOKE THAN THE WORST BATMAN?

THE BATMAN HE BEATS. HEH.





=GURGLE=

AW... WHY  
AREN'T YOU  
LAUGHING?



THE DRONES ARE  
NEARLY OVER THE  
CITY BY NOW.

=GAK=

IF HE WON'T  
DRINK, JUST USE THE  
KNIFE ON HIM. GO ON,  
JAMES. AND TELL HIM  
HOW GOOD IT FEELS  
AS YOU DO!



THUNK  
THUNK

AGH!  
WHAT ARE  
YOU--?

ALL RIGHT! YOU  
WANT TO KNOW,  
DAD?! HOW IT  
FEELS?!



Haha!  
YOU WERE RIGHT  
ABOUT IT ALL,  
BROTHER! LETTING GO,  
IN THIS MOMENT...  
I FEEL SUCH  
HAPPINESS!



YOU  
REALLY  
WANT TO  
KNOW?!

THUNK



STOPPP  
PLEASEEEEE...

CRRACK









...you're  
welcome.

**BLAM**

ERROR. CIRCUIT  
BROKEN.

SYSTEM  
SHUT DOWN.





YOU'RE MELTING IT DOWN? GOOD. NO MORE PORTALS, NO MORE WINDOWS INTO... THAT PLACE. I'LL BE GLAD WHEN THE CITY IS STRIPPED OF ALL ITS DARK METAL.



AND YOU, SIR? THE TRANSFUSION? IT'S STILL HOLDING AFTER TWO WEEKS?



...SO FAR.



I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT. THE BOY'S BLOOD...

...IT WAS LIKE CORD PLASMA OR SOME KIND OF EMBRYONIC STEM CELL, BUT MADE FROM...YOU.

THE DARK MULTIVERSE IS A REACTIVE REALM. EVERY WORLD THERE IS CREATED FROM THE HOPES OR FEARS OF SOMEONE HERE.

IT'S LIKE A WOMB IN THAT WAY. BROUGHT HERE, WITHOUT ANY METAL GROUNDING, ITS BEINGS DIE. BUT...THE BOY? HE...?



I SENT HIM BACK, SIR. I MANAGED IT JUST BEFORE YOU WOKE.

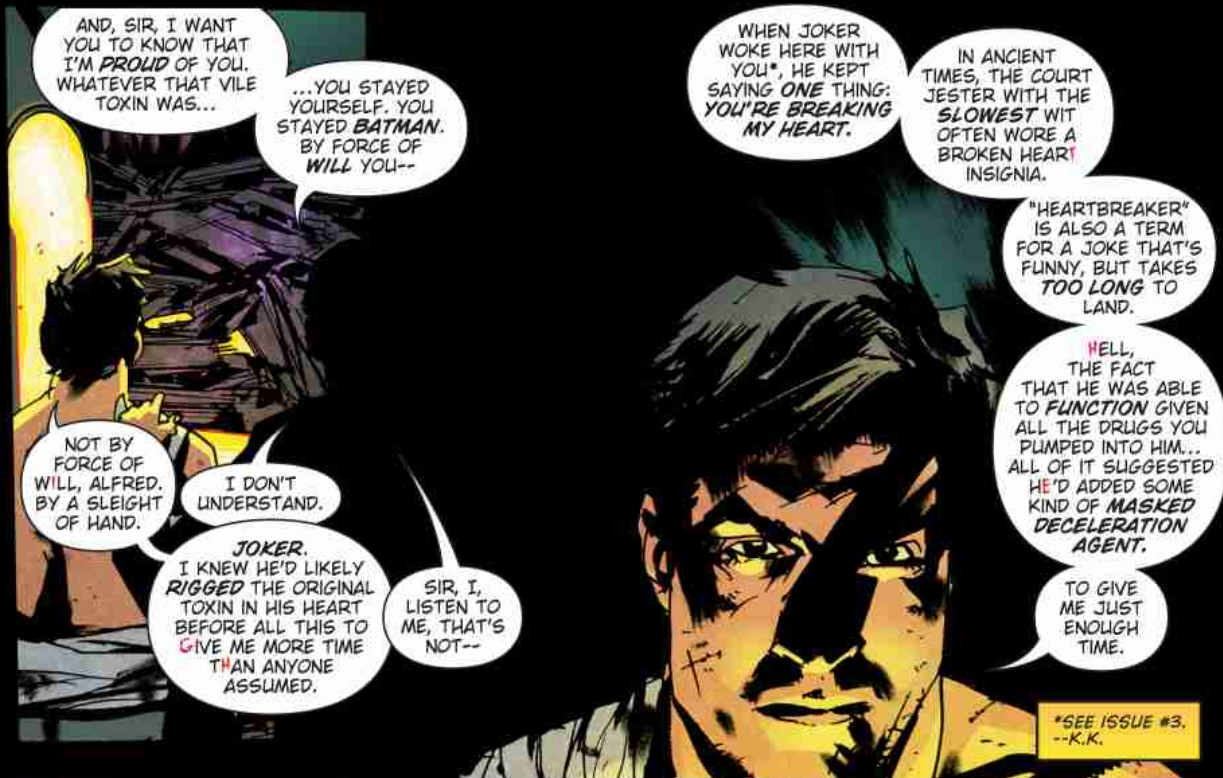
BUT WHATEVER HAPPENED, WHATEVER THEY SAID, THEY SHOULD STAY HOME.

AND...I...I TOLD HIM THAT ON A NIGHT IN THE NEAR FUTURE HIS PARENTS WOULD SUGGEST THEY GO TO THE THEATER.

HEH. SO, I SAVED ONE, SIR. AT LEAST THAT'S SOMETHING, NO?

IT IS.





AND, SIR, I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'M **PROUD** OF YOU. WHATEVER THAT VILE TOXIN WAS...

...YOU STAYED YOURSELF. YOU STAYED **BATMAN**. BY FORCE OF **WILL** YOU--

WHEN JOKER WOKE HERE WITH YOU\*, HE KEPT SAYING **ONE** THING: **YOU'RE BREAKING MY HEART**.

IN ANCIENT TIMES, THE COURT JESTER WITH THE **SLOWEST** WIT OFTEN WORE A BROKEN HEART INSIGNIA.

"**HEARTBREAKER**" IS ALSO A TERM FOR A JOKE THAT'S FUNNY, BUT TAKES **TOO LONG** TO LAND.

**HELL**, THE FACT THAT HE WAS ABLE TO **FUNCTION** GIVEN ALL THE DRUGS YOU PUMPED INTO HIM... ALL OF IT SUGGESTED HE'D ADDED SOME KIND OF **MASKED DECELERATION AGENT**.

TO GIVE ME JUST ENOUGH TIME.

NOT BY FORCE OF WILL, ALFRED. BY A SLEIGHT OF HAND.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

**JOKER**. I KNEW HE'D LIKELY **RIGGED** THE ORIGINAL TOXIN IN HIS HEART BEFORE ALL THIS TO **GIVE** ME MORE TIME THAN ANYONE ASSUMED.

SIR, I, LISTEN TO ME, THAT'S NOT--

\*SEE ISSUE #3.  
--K.K.



NO, SIR, YOU WON BECAUSE YOU REMAINED TRUE UNTIL THOSE LAST MOMENTS. SO CONTRARY TO EVERYTHING YOU SAID ABOUT BEING THE **WORST** OF THEM--

I **MEANT** WHAT I SAID, ALFRED.



WHAT?

I **MEANT** EVERY **WORD**. WHAT I SAW WHEN I STOOD HERE AND STARED INTO THE DARK...ALL THOSE VERSIONS OF ME...THE ONES WHO IMPRESS THEIR WILL ON THE CITY, ON THE **PEOPLE**...

...THE ONES WHO GIVE UP **BATMAN** FOR LOVE OR AMBITION OR GRANDER PLANS FOR CHANGE...



...THEY **ARE** MORE EFFECTIVE IN CHANGING THIS CITY. AND THEY'RE **HAPPIER**.

SIR--

NO, THE HARD TRUTH IS THEY'RE LIKELY **BETTER** BATMEN THAN ME FOR GOTHAM, A CITY THAT WAS BUILT ON SECRET PLANS FOR CONQUEST, FOR **WINNING**. I THOUGHT GOTHAM WAS ONE THING...BUT IT'S JUST NOT.

MAYBE EVERYONE WOULD BE **HAPPIER** WITH **THEM** AS HEROES. **HAPPIER** UNDER THAT **ERUM**, WITH THE WHOLE BURDEN OF GOODNESS JUST...**GONE**.



"YOU CAN'T BE SAYING..."

"I'M SAYING HE'S NOT **WRONG** ABOUT US, ALFRED. THAT MONSTER, LOCKED AWAY IN THE DUNGEON OF THE **HALL OF JUSTICE**...HE'S **RIGHT**."

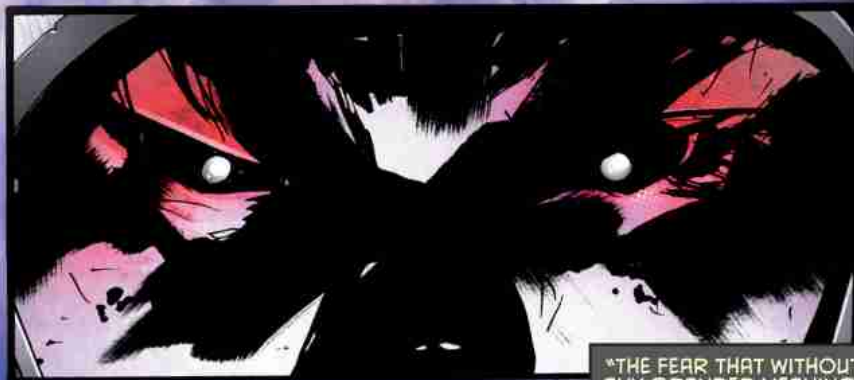
"HE'S A NIGHTMARE, NOTHING MORE."

"A NIGHTMARE IS BUILT ON **TRUTH**."

"THAT'S **JOKER** TALKING. HE IS YOUR FEAR THAT THE JOKER IS RIGHT ABOUT THE WORLD, THAT'S ALL."

"NO, JOKER SAYS THAT TO **ACCEPT** THAT THERE'S NO MEANING IN YOUR ACTIONS IS TO WIN. **SAY**, TO **BELIEVE** THERE IS MEANING IN **ALL** YOUR ACTIONS IS TO WIN."

"THAT DEMON, WHAT HE SAYS IS THAT THERE IS **NO MEANING** IN YOUR ACTIONS, THEREFORE THE ONLY MEANINGFUL ACT IS TO WIN. HE IS THE FEAR THAT WE'RE **BOTH** RIGHT, JOKER AND I."



"THE FEAR THAT WITHOUT ANY GRANDER MEANING, AT HEART WE ARE COLD, ANIMALISTIC, SELFISH THINGS."





"THEN IF HE'S RIGHT  
WHERE IS THE **BLOODY**  
HOPE IN **ANY** OF THIS?"

"WHERE IS  
THE **LIGHT**?"

"SIR?"



...  
JAMES.

I'M COMING, DAD. I  
JUST NEED TO CHANGE  
INTO MY ORANGES. THEY  
BROUGHT ME TOO BIG  
A SIZE, BUT I CAN--



JUST, LISTEN.  
THEY'RE...  
THEY'RE NOT  
TAKING YOU  
BACK.

I CALLED IN AND  
THE TRUTH IS... I WANT  
THIS TO CONTINUE. I WANT  
YOU TO KEEP GOING. WHERE  
YOU ARE ALREADY, IT'S...  
A GOOD THING.



DAD...SO YOU KNOW, I'M  
NOT WHERE I WANTED  
YOU TO THINK I WAS,  
NOT YET.

IT WAS  
PARTLY A  
MASK.

I MEAN,  
I'M...I'M  
NOT THERE  
YET.

HEH,  
SO YOU  
KNOW, SON,  
NEITHER  
AM I.

BUT YOU'RE  
TRYING. AND  
SO AM I. AND  
SO IS  
EVERYONE.



"WHERE IS THE  
LIGHT, ALFRED?"

"I DON'T KNOW, I'VE  
BEEN WRESTLING WITH  
THAT A LOT LATELY..."

"BUT THE BATMAN WHO  
LAUGHS SPOKE ABOUT  
LEARNING FROM A BAT."



"HE SAID THAT A BAT,  
BEING THE ONLY  
MAMMAL THAT CAN FLY,  
IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT  
WE CAN ACHIEVE IF WE  
*EMBRACE* OUR PRIMAL  
NATURE."

"BUT MAYBE IT'S THE  
OPPOSITE. I MEAN, LOOK  
AT A DAMN BAT."

"BAT ISN'T DESIGNED  
FOR FLIGHT THE WAY A  
BIRD IS, WITH HOLLOW  
BONES AND FEATHERED  
WINGS."

"FOR WINGS IT  
USES ITS OWN FLESH,  
STRETCHED BETWEEN  
FINGERS THAT REACH  
TOO FAR."



"A BAT'S FLIGHT  
IS ABOUT  
*DEFYING* WHAT  
COMES  
NATURALLY,  
ACHIEVING  
WHAT'S *HARD*..."

"...WHAT'S PAINFUL,  
BUT *SUBLIME*."







"AND FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THAT'S BATMAN. ISN'T IT? HE SAYS DEFY YOUR NATURE--DEFY *EVERYTHING*--TO BE BETTER THAN YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE. DAY AFTER DAY, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT."

"I THINK I'VE *ALWAYS* KNOWN THAT. AT LEAST I KNEW IT WHEN I WAS THAT BOY, RUNNING IN THE YARD."

"HAPPY IN THE ARMS OF PEOPLE I WANTED TO BE LIKE WHEN I GREW UP. SO THANK YOU, ALFRED."

"BECAUSE THE TRUTH IS BATMAN ISN'T ABOUT KNOWING *WHO* YOU ARE, BUT WHO YOU *WANT* TO BE, AND IN YOUR WAY, YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN THERE TELLING ME SO."

"I'M BLUSHING, SIR...BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW SOMETHING. WHAT I WAS TRYING TO SAY EARLIER...I *TESTED* THE TOXIN THAT CHANGED YOU AND FOUND *NO* DECELERATING AGENT IN IT."

"TH T'S... IMPOSSIBLE."

"IS IT? MAYBE YOU DIDN'T CHANGE BECAUSE...WELL, BECAUSE YOU'RE *BATMAN*."

"ALFRED..."

"NO ONE HATES THAT CLOWN MORE THAN I DO. BUT...BUT WHAT BETTER *JOKE* TO PLAY, IN THE END, THAN TO TAKE *CREDIT* FOR SOMETHING BATMAN ACHIEVED *HIMSELF*?"

HEH.









GET IN ON THE SERIES EVERYONE IS DYING TO READ!

# DCEASED

WRITTEN BY TOM TAYLOR ART BY TREVOR HAIRSINE

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# ◆ YEAR OF THE VILLAIN ◆ DARK GIFTS ◆

## DC NATION SPOTLIGHT

It's the Year of the Villain, and stemming from his obsession with the ancient god Perpetua, Lex Luthor has given DC's super-villains the power, resources and allies to finally reach their true potential.

What started in July with "The Offer" continues in August as Luthor's "Dark Gifts" explode across the entire DC Universe, making deadly moves against their enemies! Two villains who look like they are coming out on top are getting one-shots of their own in August.



### SINESTRO: YEAR OF THE VILLAIN #1

Written by **Mark Russell** • Art and cover by **Brandon Peterson**

As the universe tilts toward doom, great forces awake in an effort to stop Lex Luthor's mad plans. Luthor dispatches Sinestro, the former Green Lantern, to bring these old gods under control or destroy them before they reach Earth. Now, wielding the power of the ultraviolet spectrum, Sinestro finds his new foes even more dangerous and perplexing than he expect, when he realizes any damage he inflicts is immediately repaired.

**On sale August 7!**



### BLACK MASK: YEAR OF THE VILLAIN #1

Written by **Tom Taylor** • Art by **Cully Hamner** • Cover by **Mitch Gerads**

Black Mask was one of Gotham City's most ruthless crime lords. He had money, power and respect. But after months locked away in the Teen Titans' secret prison, Roman Sionis is finally free. Given a new purpose and new abilities thanks to Lex Luthor's offer, he's found a new racket. Corporate crime not only pays better, but it's far less dangerous. At least until Batwoman discovers what he's up to and plans to put an end to Black Mask's latest power grab. Is Black Mask the same crime boss he's always been, or time and a new approach made him something far more dangerous than he's ever been?

**On sale August 14!**

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*The Last Kryptonian-DCP*

